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FIVE STUDENTS SELECTED FOR DOE SUMMER INTERNSHIP AT THE PADUCAH GASEOUS DIFFUSION PLANT

PADUCAH, KY – Three undergraduate students and two Ph.D. students began a 10-week internship with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) this summer.

Under the Students at Work Summer Program, the interns are paired with DOE mentors to assist with various environmental remediation projects, including groundwater modeling, health physics, and surface water.

"Our interns will help support the safe cleanup mission at the Paducah Site," said Reinhard Knerr, Paducah Site Lead. "Throughout the summer, they will apply classroom exercises to actual work application in the field."

Summer interns supporting the Paducah Site Office include Wes Whipple from La Center, Kentucky; Jared Frazier from Augusta, Georgia; Yumarie Santillan from Puerto Rico; and Allen Graham from Charlotte, North Carolina. Birhanu Mengistu, from Nigeria, will work in the Lexington Site Office.

Whipple, a junior at the University of Kentucky School of Engineering at the Paducah campus, will apply his engineering skills to the nuclear industry by working at the DUF6 (depleted uranium hexafluoride) facility. Babcock & Wilcox Conversion Services operate the conversion facility, which converts DUF6 into a more stable chemical form suitable for beneficial reuse or disposal. DUF6 was generated during the operation of the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

"This is my dream internship," he said. "DUF6 is in the middle of start-up. This is the most interesting time to see the chemical process take shape. We will see how each part works, and test the system to make sure normal operations run smoothly."

Frazier, a senior biology major at South Carolina State University, will work on surface water and soils-related projects.

"I hope to learn a new level of detail in the importance of regulations, documentation, and experiments," he said.

Environmental science has always sparked Frazier's interest, and he received a college scholarship to pursue his interests.

Santillan is working on her Ph.D. in environmental science at the Universidad del Turabo and while in Paducah, she will support the Radiation Protection Program by providing direct oversight of DOE's contractors.

"For me, this opportunity is an honor," she said. "I enjoy sharing my knowledge with others so they can live in a safe and healthy environment. I hope my work this summer benefits the DOE program."

Graham attends South Carolina State University as a senior mechanical engineering technology student. He will learn how to review project documents, proposals, assessments and reports for the C-400 and Southwest Plume projects, which include removing volatile organic compounds, primarily trichloroethylene, from subsurface soils at the Paducah Site.

"When dealing with project management, it's important to develop a level of understanding where everyone wants to make the project successful," Graham said.

Graham hopes this internship experience will broaden his networking base.

"You never know where you'll end up," he said. "I hope that by developing and maintaining relationships, I'll have a friend wherever I decide to go."

Mengistu, from Ethiopia, and a second year Ph.D. student in civil engineering at North Carolina A&T State University, will spend his summer in Lexington, supporting groundwater modeling. He will participate in project meetings and will complete a technical report documenting the probabilistic analysis for technetium-99. He is learning about the Paducah Waste Disposal Option Project, and also will attend the Kentucky Research Consortium for Energy and Research and Ohio University Financial Assistance Award quarterly meetings.

"I encourage undergraduates, especially those studying engineering, to apply for an internship," he said. "The material you learn in school is not enough. You must have hands-on experience to apply what you learned in school to the actual work you perform."

The interns spent their first week in training classes and orientation sessions.

"As soon as we got here, we hit the ground running," said Graham. "We are just as excited as our mentors to start working. This will be one experience to remember."

The DOE Scholars Program is part of the Students at Work Summer Program, which is a Department-wide 10-week program that complements other DOE workforce development initiatives. The program is designed with a variety of components that promote DOE's strategic objectives of creating a pipeline of highly qualified participants in disciplinary fields that support programs in mission-critical areas of the Department of Energy. For more information on the DOE Scholars Program, visit <http://orise.ornl.gov/doescholars>.

In addition to internship opportunities, DOE recently coordinated several science outreach events this year, including a fictional environmental spill exercise with 25 Heath Middle School students, the 2011 Eco-Fair for 600 sixth graders from McCracken and Ballard Counties, and the National and Regional DOE Science Bowls.

DOE owns the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant and oversees environmental cleanup.

-DOE-



By Sarah B. Roman, LATA Kentucky

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(From left): U. S. Department of Energy summer interns include Allen Graham from Charlotte, North Carolina; Yumarie Santillan from Puerto Rico; Wes Whipple from La Center, Kentucky; and Jared Frazier from Augusta, Georgia. Not pictured: Birhanu Mengistu from Nigeria. During the 10-week Students at Work Summer Program, the interns are paired with DOE mentors to assist with various environmental remediation projects, including groundwater modeling, health physics and surface water.